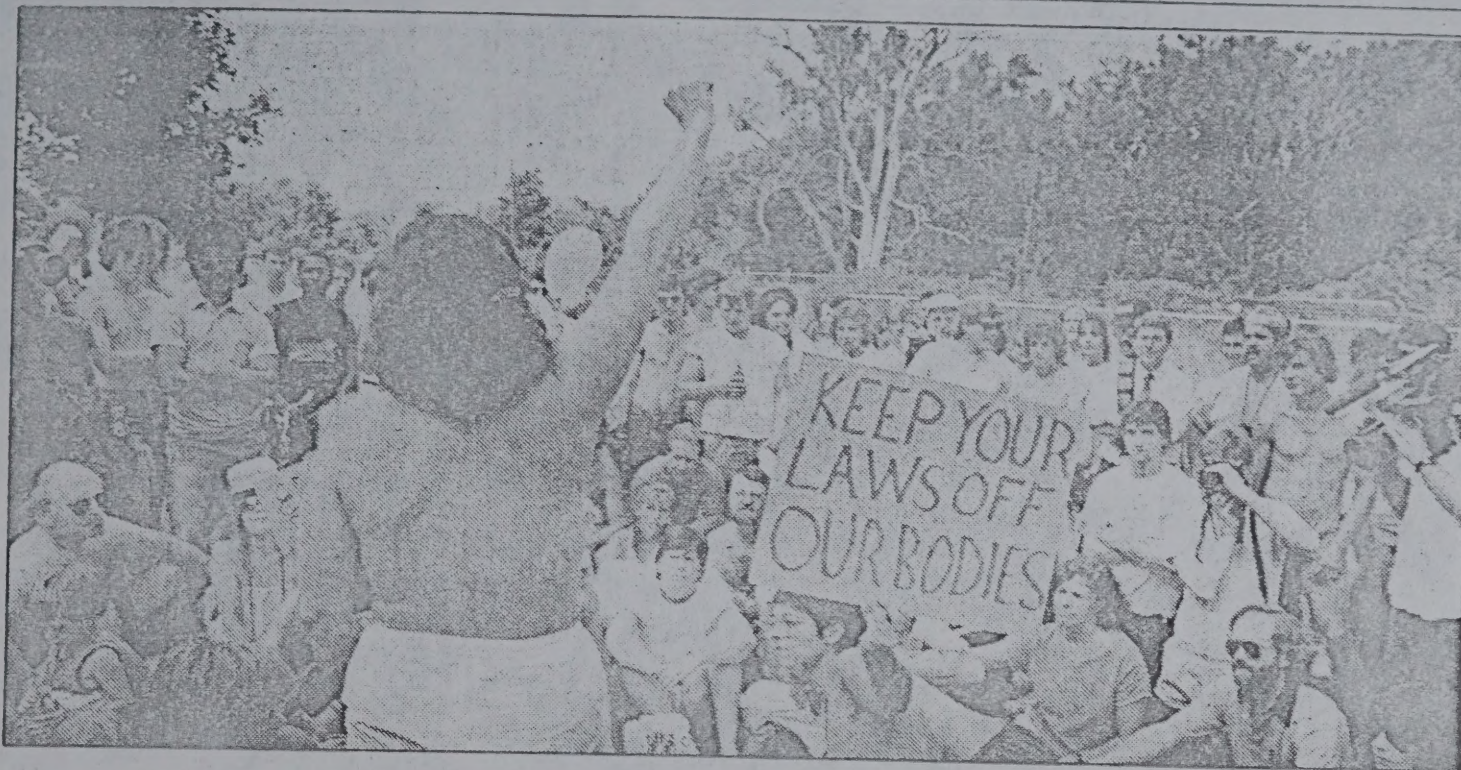




Nikki Craft bared her breasts before a crowd at Cobbs Hill Park yesterday to protest a state law banning the action. Steven Purcell Democrat and Chronicle

'A circus' in the park

Crowd watches as 7 women arrested after baring their breasts at Cobbs Hill

By Craig Gordon and Robyn Roberts
Democrat and Chronicle

Seven women were arrested in Cobbs Hill Park yesterday for taking off their shirts to protest nudity laws, while a crowd of about 100 supporters and thrill-seekers watched. ① The women bared their breasts to protest laws allowing men, but not women, to go topless in public. They plan to use their arrests to change the law.

Nine women formed a circle and took off their shirts about 2:35 p.m. in a grassy area north of the reservoir in the park, bounded by Monroe Avenue, Culver Road, Highland Avenue and Interstate 490.

As the women removed their shirts, many men in the crowd, who were shirtless themselves, began shouting catcalls.

"It was a circus atmosphere," said Nikki Craft, a protest organizer who has led similar demonstrations in other parts of the country.

Police arrested seven women. Two were not arrested because they put their shirts back on when officers asked them to.

Charged with exposure of person, a violation punishable by up to 15 days in jail and a \$250 fine, were: Craft, 36, of Oshkosh, Wis.; Ramona Santorelli, 28, 23 Girton Place, Rochester; Lynn Zicari, 24, 305 Cobb Terrace, Brighton; Deborah Ann Seymour, 34, 24 Bateau Terrace, Irondequoit; Kathleen Reilly, 40, 643 Highland Ave., Rochester; Mary Lou Schloss, 38, 237 Vassar St., Rochester; and Elise Jo Tooley, 27, 142 Mount Vernon Ave., Rochester.

The seven women were taken to the High-

land Section police office, given tickets ordering them to appear in City Court at 10:30 a.m. Monday, and released.

Their protest drew men and women supporting their cause, but more men said they came to see the women take off their shirts.

"Mainly I came down here because we brought a cooler of beer and there were women exposing themselves," said Michael Bell, 25, of 499 Meigs St.

Craft, a protest organizer, said she considered not taking off her shirt because she was fearful of the crowd. At one point, when Craft asked for supporters to sit down, ② one man shouted back, "Let your bra support you."

The women tried to explain their beliefs to the crowd but were shouted down. ③

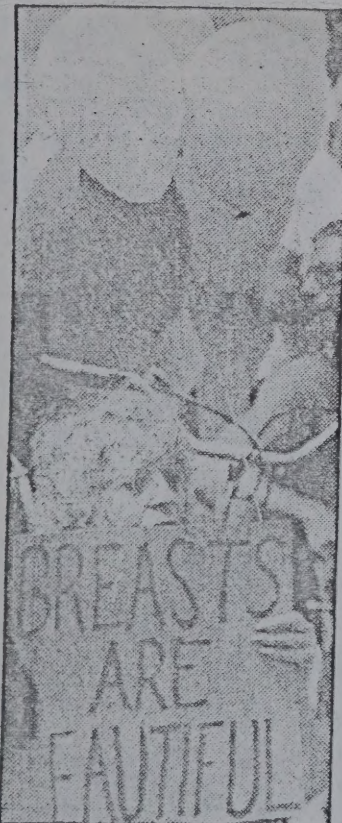
Craft then took off her shirt to a growing chorus of yells from the men. One-by-one, the eight other women peeled off their shirts.

Rochester police, who left briefly, returned about 10 minutes later, and Capt. Robert Tacito of Highland Section asked the women to put on their shirts.

With the crowd booing, Craft said, "You're watching society change right here." She told Tacito, "I will not put on my shirt. I am committing an act of civil disobedience."

Police led the seven still-shirtless women about 100 feet to police cars, where they put on their shirts before being taken in.

Said Zicari, one of those arrested: "I don't think it will accomplish anything right away. If they can get used to seeing a woman's body, not in the way the perverted magazines show them, it won't be such a big deal."



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Phyllis Santorelli, mother of demonstration organizer Ramona Santorelli, watches the crowd gathered to see nine women remove their shirts in protest of a state law. Seven were arrested.

- ① over 200, I'd say
- ② most sat down
- ③ not so

